

June 18, 2002 Senate Hearing

**Conducted by the Senate Subcommittee on Consumer Affairs, Foreign
Commerce and Tourism**

Testimony of Frank Shorter

Chairman, United States Anti-Doping Agency,

Good morning, my name is Frank Shorter. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. You may know me as an Olympic marathoner and television commentator, but today I come to you as the Chairman of the United States Anti-Doping Agency, which has been recognized by Congress as the independent, national anti-doping agency for Olympic sport in the United States. Our mission is to protect and preserve the health of athletes, the integrity of competition, and the well-being of sport through the elimination of doping. Last year we conducted more than 4800 tests for steroids and other prohibited doping substances. As is readily apparent from today's headlines, anabolic steroids and the many steroid precursors sold in the United States as dietary supplements have become a major problem in sport. U.S. athletes are in the untenable position of being at risk of a failed doping test if they take any dietary supplement because of product contamination.

In Olympic sport, the most notable, systematic state-supported program of doping with anabolic steroids was that conducted by the East Germans from 1974 until the Berlin Wall fell. For example, after less than two years of steroid use the East German women's swimming team competed in the 1976 Olympics in Montreal. In contrast to their performance in 1972, when they won only five medals, they won 18 medals including 11 out of 13 possible golds in the 1976

Games. The results of this program have since been substantiated through the testimony of many of the athletes themselves, their coaches and doctors during the East German doping trials.

The documented side effects of steroids and steroid precursors among these East German athletes and others, are severe and include effects on the liver and reproductive system, growth arrest in adolescents, susceptibility to cancers, permanent masculinization of women, shrinking of testicles and impotence in men, and scarring from steroid acne.

I have a very personal interest in doping in Olympic Sport. I won the gold medal for the United States in the marathon at the 1972 Olympics in Munich. Four years later, I ran an even better race but finished second to an East German at the Montreal Games. At the time, I knew that it would be absolutely possible to increase my chances of beating the East Germans and others who were using steroids if I cheated by doping, but it never occurred to me to do so. To me that is not what sport is about. I didn't cheat and I finished second.

In the current sport environment, the availability of steroid precursors as dietary supplements is of major concern. One example is androstenedione, which, originally developed as part of the East German steroid program, metabolizes in the body into the steroid testosterone.

Following the acknowledgement by Mark McGwire in his home run record year, that he had used androstenedione, sales in the United States dramatically increased. This phenomenal demand, particularly among teenagers, led to the mass marketing of other steroid precursors like 19-norandrostenedione, which metabolizes in the body into the steroid nandrolone.

Through our testing program USADA has recognized a serious problem with the sale of steroid precursors in dietary supplements. In increasing numbers, athletes are failing doping tests after taking mis-labeled dietary supplements. Reasonably cautious athletes know to avoid products, which have steroid precursors reflected on the product label. Unfortunately, a surprisingly high percentage of dietary supplements contain doping substances, which are not disclosed on the label. For example, a recent study of 624 dietary supplements by the International Olympic Committee found that 41% of the products from American companies contained a steroid precursor or banned substance not disclosed on the label.

The fact that U.S. companies have flooded the market with steroid precursors has caused the international sporting community to charge that the United States is the prime source of "international doping pollution." The international community simply can't understand why all of our professional sports do not test for steroids and other performance enhancing substances. They can't understand why we allow steroid precursors to be sold over the counter like candy to our teenagers (and their teenagers via the Internet). It is important to the image of America and to all clean American athletes that we not be perceived as a society that condones the use of steroids and steroid precursors.

The status quo presents significant health risks for athletes and the general public; it undermines the image of the United States and our athletes as being committed to drug-free sport. The solution to the steroid precursor problem is to follow the lead of other nations and regulate steroid precursors as steroids. This could be accomplished through a minor modification of the Controlled Substances Act, which already recognizes the importance of regulating immediate precursors to

controlled substances. With only a minor modification to the Act's definition of "Immediate Precursor" the Attorney General would have the authority to classify steroid precursors as controlled substances equal to steroids. It is likely that the production of these steroid precursors will stop as soon as they can no longer be sold over the counter.

Our organization considers Congress to be the appropriate place to turn for the necessary leadership on these issues. USADA believes we are in the midst of a health crisis, which while and the development of a body that mirrors the image of the elite athlete. Now is rooted in professional and amateur sport impacts the youth of our nation. It is not limited to their quest for athletic performance and accomplishment, but includes the pursuit of recognition the time to enact change that will prevent our children from becoming a generation exposed to widespread steroid use. Children have always emulated their sports idols, I did. And these same children, more often than we would like to admit, know much more than adults do about just what their idols did and are doing to achieve their goals. They should never have to feel that at some time in their athletic futures there will be no choice but to take these illegal performance enhancing drugs and precursors. We plead with you to provide intervention to this health crisis and seek revised legislation and regulation.

Thank you.